

## **IV. AREA AND FACILITY CONCEPTS AND STANDARDS**

### **A. Standards**

To determine the appropriate amount and type of park land for College Station, this Master Plan utilizes standards developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), an independent, nonprofit organization which is the field's professional organization with a membership of over 23,000. Two of NRPA's publications, the 1983 *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*, and the 1996 *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*, were consulted in the preparation of area and facility concepts and standards for College Station. As described below, NRPA's 1983 publication included specific acreage recommendations for various types of parks, although its 1996 guidelines encouraged more flexibility in both size and design in line with unique local factors and desires.

### **B. Local Adaptation ~ Influences**

The city government is the primary provider of parks and public open space in College Station. Park and open space needs are most heavily influenced by the expectations of College Station residents for high quality park services, although the location of Texas A&M University within city limits, the availability to the general public of park and recreation facilities owned by the College Station Independent School District, and the city's immediate proximity to the City of Bryan, are also important factors. Residential and traffic patterns, road access, convenience, and the availability of land also impact the city's provision of park land.

Many of the park, recreation, and open space needs of Texas A&M students, faculty, and staff are met on campus via ballfields, sports courts, a new recreation center, and passive open spaces. The University also operates Hensel Park within city limits, which is a joint-use facility for students and College Station residents. However, it cannot be assumed that all of the university-related park and open space needs are being met on campus due to the distribution of university students, faculty, and staff throughout the area, and the demand for organized athletic leagues within the city.

The proximity of College Station to the City of Bryan also impacts the provision of park, recreation, and open space services and facilities in College Station. Evidence from registrations in College Station's sports leagues suggests that many of the park and recreation needs of Bryan residents are not being met by their city government, and some are choosing to utilize facilities and services available in College Station. This potential impact of Bryan residents, however, is not considered to be as significant as the impact of Texas A&M students, faculty, and staff.

## C. Area and Facility Concepts

NRPA's classification table for park, open spaces, and pathways has been adapted to reflect the existing inventory of park property in College Station and anticipated future needs. The categories of parks, open space, and pathways which are applicable to College Station are:

**Mini-park.** A mini-park is used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs. Many school and church playgrounds often serve as de facto mini-parks. NRPA recommends that mini-parks be between 2,500 square feet and one acre in size, although technically, any park smaller than five acres would be considered a mini-park. The City of College Station currently has six developed mini-parks totaling 10.87 acres and one undeveloped park at 3.21 acres (**see Table 4, page IV-3**). However, the Parks and Recreation Board has established a policy not to develop mini-parks under five acres in the future. Almost all of these parks were created by dedications from developers and the limited use and effectiveness of parcels under five acres does not justify the costs associated with their maintenance and operations. As such, unless circumstances warrant otherwise, no parks under five acres will be established in the future.

**Neighborhood Park.** This category serves as the recreational and social focus of a neighborhood, permitting both active and passive uses. NRPA recommends that neighborhood parks should be a minimum of five acres, with five to ten acres optimal. College Station currently has 26 neighborhood parks totaling 233.82 acres (**see Table 4, page IV-3**). Because the city's policy is to provide for activities that focus on youth and families (such as soccer, softball, and baseball, which necessitate large playing fields), neighborhood parks in College Station are generally 5 to 15 acres in size.

**Community Park.** Community parks focus on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. In serving multiple neighborhoods, they provide many of the same types of facilities as neighborhood parks with the possible addition of swimming pools and community centers. While NRPA acknowledges that the size of community parks should be determined by desired usage, in general they should be between 30 and 50 acres. College Station currently has eight community parks totaling 283.95 acres - Central, Bee Creek, Hensel, Thomas, Southwood, Tarrow, Wolf Pen Creek, and Southeast (**see Table 4, page IV-3**). Southeast Park, the newest community park of 62 acres, was purchased in 2001 to serve the future needs of south College Station. In general, community parks in the city will be 40-50 acres and serve one park zone.

**Regional Natural Park.** Regional parks serve entire cities or regions. Activities available in regional parks may include picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, camping, trail use, golfing, etc. Regional parks tend to be large (over 200 acres) and because of their nature, are usually not figured into the "core" park land provided by a city. College Station currently has one, 515.5-acre natural area, regional park site - Lick Creek Park (**see Table 4, page IV-3**). Of note, there are no state or national parks within a twenty-mile radius of the city.

**Regional Athletic Park.** Athletic or sports complexes typically consolidate heavily programmed athletic facilities for activities such as softball, baseball, and soccer into a few strategically located

sites throughout the community. The location of these facilities is important due to the traffic, lighting, and noise that are often associated with them.

**TABLE 4**  
**COLLEGE STATION PARK SYSTEM - CLASSIFICATION & ACRES**

PARK *	ZONE	MINI	NEIGHBORHOOD	COMMUNITY	REGIONAL
ANDERSON	6		8.94		
BEE CREEK	6			43.50	
BILLIE MADELEY	2		5.14		
BRISON	6		9.20		
BROTHERS POND	5		16.12		
CASTLEGATE	13		4.35		
CENTRAL	3			47.20	
CY MILLER	3	2.50			
EASTGATE	2	1.80			
EDELWEISS	5		12.30		
EDELWEISS GARTENS**	10		7.74		
EMERALD FOREST	8		4.59		
GABBARD	6		10.70		
GEORGIE K. FITCH	5		11.30		
HENSEL (TAMU)*	1			29.70	
JACK & DOROTHY MILLER	5		10.00		
LEMON TREE	6		15.40		
LICK CREEK **	11				515.5
LION'S	2	1.50			
LONGMIRE	5		4.16		
LUTHER JONES	6	1.80			
MERRY OAKS	2		4.60		
OAKS	2		7.50		
PARKWAY	2	1.90			
PEBBLE CREEK	11		10.20		
RAINTREE	4		13.00		
RICHARD CARTER	2		7.14		
SANDSTONE	8		15.21		
SHENANDOAH**	10		12.10		
SOUTHEAST**	9			62.00	
SOUTHWEST**	6		4.78		
SOUTHWOOD	5			44.70	
STEEPLECHASE**	5		9.0		
THOMAS	2			16.10	
UNIVERSITY**	2		10.20		
VETERANS	4				150.00
W.A. TARROW	6			21.26	
WESTFIELD**	10		4.29		
WINDWOOD	4	1.37			
WOLF PEN CREEK	3			19.49	
WOOD CREEK	8		6.60		
WOODLAND HILLS**	9	3.21			
WOODWAY**	7		9.26		
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>		<b>14.08</b>	<b>233.82</b>	<b>283.95</b>	<b>665.50</b>
<b>UNDEVELOPED (10 Park Sites)</b>		<b>3.21</b>	<b>57.37</b>	<b>62.00</b>	<b>515.50</b>
<b>DEVELOPED (33 Parks)</b>		<b>10.87</b>	<b>176.45</b>	<b>221.95</b>	<b>150.00</b>

<i><b>TOTAL PARK ACRES = 1,197.35</b></i>	<i><b>DEVELOPED = 559.27</b></i>	<i><b>UNDEVELOPED = 638.08</b></i>
OTHER SITES: Cemetery - 18.5 Acres and Conference Center - 2.3 (both in Zone 6) = 20.8 Acres		

*\* Texas A&M ownership                      \*\* Undeveloped sites (2002)                      See Map C, page I-12, for location of parks.*

Southwood Athletic Park, a community park located in Zone 5, is College Station's first developed athletic complex, however, funds were provided in a 1995 bond election to purchase 150 acres for a regional athletic park. In August 1998, a site located east of Highway 6 bypass and between State Highway 30 and Farm to Market Road 60 (see **page I-9**) was purchased for the new complex. In November 1998, the City Council approved "Veterans Park and Athletic Complex" as the official name of this new site. In the 1998 bond issue, voters approved \$2.038 million for the first phase of development. Additional funding approved by the City Council allowed the development of six soccer fields and two softball fields. The construction was completed in the fall of 2002, with use to begin in 2003. Future phases have been identified and with implementation determined by the athletic needs of the community and funding availability.

**Recreation & Community Centers.** Recreation and Community Centers typically provide facilities for a range of recreation needs, such as gymnasiums, group activity rooms, and swimming pools. College Station currently has one 27,200 square foot recreation/community center (Lincoln Center), which is utilized for youth activities and programmed indoor sport recreational programs. In addition, the Parks and Recreation Department inventory includes a Conference Center and a 4,000 square foot Teen Center. The city government intends to continue its existing policy of utilizing multi-purpose buildings at schools for public indoor recreation programs, but may need to provide additional public recreation centers in the future as the city expands.

**Greenways.** Greenways tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment. As such, their size varies considerably depending on the terrain and distance between park segments. College Station has developed a Greenways Master Plan for the identification and use of selected portions of the 100-year floodplain and other areas to provide linkages between parks, schools, homes, and businesses. In 1998, \$3.64 million was approved in a bond election to begin acquisition of greenways throughout the city. The Greenways Master Plan was illustrated in **Map D (page I-10)**.

**Facilities.** Park, recreation, and open space facilities include play units, sand volleyball courts, basketball courts, tennis courts, swimming pools, recreation centers, teen centers, baseball fields, adult and youth softball fields, adult and youth soccer fields, football fields, pavilions, gazebos/shelters, ponds, jogging/walking trails, exercise stations, and nature trails. A complete inventory and description of these facilities is included in **Section V**.

## **D. Area Guidelines and Standards**

NRPA's 1996 guidelines shifted away from setting park land dedication standards, preferring instead to recommend flexibility in order to accommodate the unique circumstances and situations that can and do arise in every community.<sup>1</sup> As a result of policy reviews and public dialogue carried out in connection with the development of this Master Plan, a number of changes have been made in

---

<sup>1</sup>Mertes, J.D., and Hall, J.R. (1996). Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines. National Recreation and Park Association, p. 53.

the park, recreation, and open space standards described in the city's 1997 Comprehensive Plan. For example, as indicated above, College Station's Parks and Recreation Board has decided that parks less than five acres (mini-parks) will generally not be created.

**Neighborhood Parks.** Established principally through the Land Dedication Ordinance, neighborhood parks are an important priority for the city due to existing residential development patterns. After considering a wide range of information and public input concerning the development of this Master Plan, the Parks and Recreation Board established a standard of 3.5 acres per 1,000 population for neighborhood parks. This was formalized through the council approval of the revised ordinance in 1998. The ordinance was reviewed and revised in January 2002, and still uses the standard adopted in 1998. Based upon the current 247.90 acres, (this includes mini-parks) the existing ratio is slightly higher at 4.16 acres per 1,000 population (see Section VI), and residents have indicated that they are satisfied (see Table 3, page III-4).

**Community Parks.** Also as a result of the Master Plan process, the Parks and Recreation Board has established a standard of 3.5 acres per 1,000 population for community parks. Based upon the current 283.95 acres, the existing ratio is 4.76 acres per 1,000 population, and residents have indicated their satisfaction with it. Combined with neighborhood parks, the total ratio of neighborhood plus community parks per 1,000 population is therefore 8.92 acres, which falls within NRPA's previous recommendation of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of park land per 1,000 population.<sup>2</sup> College Station's goal is to provide one community park within each of the sixteen park zones.

Some existing community parks in College Station serve neighborhood as well as community recreational needs due to their location and facilities. Likewise, some community needs, such as practice fields, are met in the larger neighborhood parks.

**Regional Parks/Athletic Complexes.** In addition to the Southwood Park Athletic Complex, College Station currently has two regional parks. Lick Creek Park, an undeveloped natural park, and the 150-acre Veterans Park and Athletic Complex. As mentioned previously, the November 1998 bond issue included funds to begin development of these parks. The first phase of development of Veterans Park was completed in fall 2002. Lick Creek Park development is scheduled to begin in 2003.

**Recreation/Community Centers.** College Station currently has one recreation/community center (Lincoln Center), one conference center that is used for meetings, and a Teen Center. Rather than setting a standard for the provision of these centers, the Parks and Recreation Board intends to continue its existing policy of utilizing multi-purpose buildings at schools for recreation centers. However, due to design and schedule limitations, these frequently do not function as full service recreation facilities. New facilities are needed, for example, east of Texas Avenue and south of Harvey Mitchell Parkway (FM2818) in order to meet current demand. The need for additional recreation/community centers will be assessed on an on-going basis.

---

<sup>2</sup>National Park and Recreation Association (1983). Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines.

**Greenways.** In College Station, the designation of greenways - a high priority for the next ten years - is driven by flood plain considerations and a desire to maintain a natural environment where possible. Their provision is a resource-driven, as opposed to a standard-based, decision (**see Section VI**). The City Council appointed a special Greenways Implementation Task Force comprised of 11 citizens to develop a master plan for greenways in the community. The Greenways Master Plan, approved by the City Council, defines greenways, identifies current resources, provides a classification system for greenways in College Station, establishes priorities for acquisition, and suggests guidelines for their development and maintenance.

## **E. Facility Guidelines and Standards**

In its 1996 Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, NRPA recommends that the provision of park facilities be based upon citizen desires and specific regional needs. In College Station, facility needs are also determined by the city's desire to attract local, state, regional, and national sports tournaments in order to spur economic development.

The provision of some park, recreation, and open space facilities in College Station is standard based. As a point of departure, these standards may be modified according to local needs and desires identified during the development of individual park site plans. The following facilities are typically included in College Station parks:

**Neighborhood Parks.** Basketball courts, benches, play units, walking paths, shelters, picnic units, trees, and sand volleyball courts.

**Community Parks.** Basketball courts, tennis courts, restrooms, group pavilions, parking areas, trails, trees, and competition athletic fields.

The provision of other recreation, park, and open space facilities in College Station is demand based, as discussed in **Section VI** of this Master Plan. Specifically, additional competition athletic fields (soccer, softball, baseball, and football), swimming pools, recreation centers, and teen centers will be provided as needed to meet the needs of the resident population and to facilitate economic development by attracting local, state, regional, and national sports tournaments. Additional swimming pools will be provided when demand exceeds capacity, although community parks in new growth areas may include both a swimming pool and a recreation center to meet anticipated needs.

The provision of nature trails is generally resource-based. Nature trails will be developed as part of the city's Greenways Master Plan.

Greenways protect natural habitats and provide pedestrian linkages for residents to travel between neighborhoods, schools, parks, and other key community resources.

The College Station Greenways Master Plan identifies potential greenways, establishes classifications, and lists priorities for acquisition and development. Initial acquisition funding of \$3.5 million was approved by the voters in the 1998 bond election.



